

REMARKS

With the above amendments, claims 1, 3, 4, 6, and 8-18 remain in the application and stand rejected. Claims 5 and 7 have been canceled in this response.

Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested in light of the following reasons.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner is respectfully requested to consider and initial the IDS submitted by Applicants on November 21, 2003. A copy of the IDS is submitted herewith for the convenience of the Examiner.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 5 and 7 have been canceled and claim 6 has been amended in response to the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph rejection in the last office action.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 3, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,184,057 to Van Andel et al. (“Van Andel”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,378,270 to Brasch (“Brasch”). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is patentable over Van Andel and Brasch at least for reciting that the topmost metallic layer comprises tin and that the topmost metallic layer provides a solderable metallic surface for electrically coupling the solar cell to an external electrical circuit. According to the last office action, the transparent conductor disclosed in Van Andel reads on the recited topmost metallic layer, citing to Van Andel col. 6, lines 43-58. It is respectfully submitted that Van Andel does not disclose that its transparent conductor provides a solderable metallic surface for electrically coupling an external

electrical circuit to the solar cell. For example, Van Andel is clear that that the transparent conductor is covered with a protective clear coat, rather than providing a solderable metallic surface (Van Andel, FIG. 13, top coat 15 over transparent conductor 2). Brasch does not add to Van Andel in this regard. Therefore, claim 1 is patentable over the combination of Van Andel and Brasch.

Claim 1 is also patentable over the combination of Van Andel and Brasch at least for requiring the topmost metallic layer to be on the backside of the solar cell. In contrast, Van Andel discloses a substantially different etching configuration in that its transparent conductor is on the front side of the solar cell (Van Andel, col. 10, lines 13-16). Brasch does not add to Van Andel in this regard. Therefore, claim 1 is patentable over the combination of Van Andel and Brasch.

Claim 1 is also patentable over the combination of Van Andel and Brasch at least for requiring the tin layer to be the topmost metallic layer. The last office action reads Van Andel's temporary substrate as the "first layer," citing to Van Andel col. 3, lines 38-50. As noted in Van Andel, the temporary substrate is made of a metal or metal alloy and maybe aluminum, copper, or other metals (Van Andel, col. 3, lines 24-50). It is to be noted, however, that the temporary substrate must be over the transparent conductor when the temporary substrate is etched to be removed (Van Andel, FIG. 11, temporary substrate 1 on transparent conductor 2). Therefore, the transparent conductor cannot be the recited topmost metallic layer at least relative to the temporary substrate ("first layer"). There are also other layers on the other side of the transparent conductor towards the back side of the solar cell. Brasch does not add to Van Andel in this regard. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is patentable over the combination of Van Andel and Brasch.

Claims 3, 8, and 11 depend on claim 1, and are thus patentable over Van Andel and Brasch at least for the same reasons that claim 1 is patentable.

Claim 13 is patentable over Van Andel and Brasch at least for reciting that the tin layer is on the backside of the solar cell. As explained above, Van Andel's transparent conductor is on the front side, not the backside, of the solar cell.

Claim 15 is patentable over Van Andel and Brasch at least for reciting that the tin layer is on the backside of the solar cell. As explained above, Van Andel's transparent conductor is on the front side, not the backside, of the solar cell.

Claims 16 and 18 depend on claim 15, and are thus patentable over Van Andel and Brasch at least for the same reasons that claim 15 is patentable.

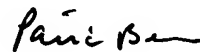
Claims 4-7, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 17 stand rejected as unpatentable over various combinations that include Van Andel and Brasch as primary references. These claims are patentable at least for depending on base claims that are patentable over Van Andel and Brasch.

Conclusion

For at least the above reasons, it is believed that claims 1, 3, 4, 6, and 8-18 are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (408)436-2112 for any questions.

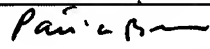
Respectfully submitted,
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